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AMERICANISM  
*the*  
RELIGION *of* MANKIND

BY  
MOSES STEINBERG

713½ WEST SARATOGA ST.  
BALTIMORE, MD.

1920



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## FOREWORD

PICTURE an ancient structure which, built upon a rock-solid foundation, has been subjected to seasonable repairs and remodeling, until its old magnificence has disappeared, and finally the ravages of time expose it to the danger of collapse. Is it not admittedly wise to do away with the old structure and build a new one upon the same or a similar solid foundation in order that it may meet the requirements of its use?

Anyone who is aware of present-day conditions can not fail to regard religion as in the position of the building mentioned in the above illustration; yet it must be admitted that the decalogue, as the foundation of religion, is still as solid as when it was promulgated from Sinai.

Observing that the promise of reward or the threat of punishment; that the efforts put forth to make people believe in the existence of a place besides Heaven, to prevent immorality and insure their abstention from all evil deeds, commonly called sin, have remained unheeded; that vice of all kinds is conspicuously seen to be increasing almost daily—all this indicates the necessity of a change in the method

of teaching religion, and that is, to inculcate conviction instead of belief.

The conception of the blessing of a humanity united through understanding and the conviction that Americanism alone can make this possible, are the motives that have inspired the writing of what follows.





RELIGION is a word of multitudinous conceptions and beliefs; but its failure through centuries of propagation, in its two great objects, viz: to inculcate belief in God and enforce the observance of the moral code, renders it utterly meaningless.

That religion is a complete failure from the moral standpoint is a fact only too obvious to the average mind. The ever-growing waves of crime, the court dockets overburdened with the most unspeakable cases of vice, the ever-increasing necessity for new legislation to enforce the moral code, the constant popular cry of inefficient police departments, the daily outcropping of reformers and the subsequent demand for super-reformers to reform the reformers—all these prove, beyond doubt, that religion is an impotent factor and that it functions only to disintegrate humanity into races, sects, creeds and denominations.

### *The Cause of the Downfall of Religion*

To those who do not indulge in the study of words may be cited, as an example of the paramount importance oftentimes attached to one word, or collection of words that, as legend has it, the world was created by word; and the tendency up to the present day to lay great stress upon one's word is another example. One word caused the downfall of religion and that

word is belief—because belief, the inconceivable and the impossible, has been preached instead of conviction, the reasonable and comprehensible.

Belief not only in God, but also in a man God, in saints, in atmosphere and what not, has been preached unavailingly for centuries, for we find ourselves to-day part of an absolutely disbelieving humanity. Even among those who openly profess their religious beliefs, probably because of their unconsciousness of the perplexity of mind, there are practically few who sincerely believe; else, were it otherwise, why do we find so much evil within the immediate ranks of these believers? What good is it to proclaim belief and at the same time be in violation of the commandments? Either they believe in evil, or disbelieve all. The latter view, seemingly, is preferable, for the human instinct is against belief. The fact that man has been elevated from the beast by virtue of the quintessence, which enables him to comprehend, to discriminate, to adjudge, to form an opinion and to be convinced, may safely be advanced as a logical reason in proof of the impossibility of belief.

Belief is the direct guide to bigotry and fanaticism, and the havoc suffered by humanity, through the ages, from all sorts of religious fanaticism is beyond description. The belief that one's conception of religion and the divinity is superior sets him, in his own opinion, spiritually and intellectually above his neighbor of different belief, with the result that the seeds of prejudice are unconsciously deep planted. In the belief that they were purifying souls, ecclesiastics burned human beings of another faith at the



stake. In the belief that God would sanction their deeds, the men responsible for the yet unfinished human slaughter began that greatest of world conflicts. It is the preachings and teachings of belief or beliefs which have created for us a form of religion in which we preach altruism and practice ostracism; preach love and practice abhorrence; lay claim to the highest idealism and lead lives of the most selfish egotism.

The idea that conviction and not belief is the basic fundamental of religion could be supported by numerous quotations from the Bible, but because every word, every meaning of the Bible has been interpreted and misinterpreted so frequently, it is deemed advisable to omit those quotations. The Bible in its most important form serves to define and interpret the practicability of the laws of man as expressed in the decalogue. Why would it not be practical to write a new Bible—based upon the same principles, rendering interpretations of the commandments in conformity with present-day conditions, in a language of not “thou sayeth,” but “you said it”?

### *Love, Religion and Americanism*

The term love has been used as a more comprehensive interpretation of religion, but seemingly never properly interpreted, so as to enable it to be put into practice. The first cohesion of religion and love is conveyed in the biblical doctrine of “Love thy neighbor as THYSELF.” In view of the varying conceptions of the numerous existing forms of expressions of love, the question arises, How shall we love our neighbors? Under prevailing condi-

tions and bearing in mind individual propensities and inclinations, we find ourselves loving those who are not our neighbors, while holding feelings for neighbors which are far removed from that sentiment.

The second and what is termed a more advanced form of love is the scriptural "Love Thine Enemy." Though this doctrine bears a generous appearance, its genuineness has been completely disproved by the attitude of man to man and nation toward nation. Taking the great war as an example, it may be rightfully said: That in their determination to love their enemies, they have destroyed their neighbors. There can be only one interpretation of "Love Thy Neighbor as Thyself," which would make it feasible; and that is when by it is meant: give your neighbor the same rights as you would take for yourself.

Americanism, whose basic fundamental is equality of rights to all irrespective of race, color, religion or nationality, is the first and only ideal which in word and deed rendered the correct interpretation of love. In other words, Americanism, in itself an ideal, has made possible the practicability of what is regarded as the highest religious doctrine—one that could not be accomplished by the preaching and teaching of ecclesiasts and theologians all through the ages.

The reason why religion is still in existence, though in name only, is because it has always diplomatically sided with the strong, with those in power, forsaking the weak and the helpless. Thus religion has sanctioned the inhuman deeds of Czars, Kings, Kaisers, etc., at all times. In a democratic country where, unfortunately, the plutocracy dominates the

courts of justice, which interpret the laws of the land in their favor, we find religion working harmoniously with them.

It is deplorable indeed, when we think of the great fathers of this country, who fought and died for freedom of thought, as evidenced by their abolition of all sorts of religious persecution, in order to Americanize religion, that we at present are trying to religionize America! If we are true and sincere in boasting of our patriotism, if we glory in the memory of the great fathers of this country and the noble cause they fought and died for, let us follow in their footsteps and amplify the Americanization of religion by making the basic fundamentals of religion synonymous with the fundamentals of Americanism. These do not imply any particular belief, but are fully convincing when properly interpreted and applied, thus defining religion as a faith that a patriotic American would be proud to adhere to.

There are other defective standards of the present social order which suggest the unification of Americanism and religion. These could be modified so as to be made acceptable to the strongest supporters of the separation of religion from state. An outline of the ideas to which the consideration of these matters gives rise, as well as a suggestion of the necessary amendment to the Constitution of the United States to carry them into effect, will be given in subsequent paragraphs.

### *Law and Obedience*

Municipal, state and federal legislative bodies are continually engaged in an endless process of passing



and enacting laws upon their respective statute books applying to every phase of life in such numbers that at present one can hardly walk ten paces, or utter ten words, without being in violation of some one of these laws. And, egregiously, whether a city ordinance, or a state or federal law, no problem has been solved. Rather a new problem arises as to how to enforce this law. In some instances, the problem of enforcement is being debated and discussed even before the passage of the law, or simultaneously with its passage. Why is it that a law passed by a body of legislators representing a government by the people and for the people should have to be enforced upon the people? Are the American people disobedient? On the contrary, the American people have, in many instances, individually and collectively, demonstrated not only obedience to law, but also the virtues of self-denial and self-sacrifice for any worthy cause. Moreover, the passage of some laws of recent date and amendments to the federal constitution recently adopted prove that a majority of the citizens of America have sacrificed some of their personal liberties in favor of a minority. Such a people certainly must be conceded to be lawful and obedient. What then makes necessary the enforcement of these laws, which might be expected to be cheerfully obeyed by a law-abiding people?

The answer can be found in the following reasons: First, every law in force has not been passed and enacted because it has met with the approval of the majority of the people, but because of the influence of a few; and in some instances, the passage of a law

could be accredited solely to the oratorical ability and social standing of the one who sponsored and advocated it, not to mention those laws passed through the direct influence and activities of religious, political and financial interests. Second, most of the laws appear to be contrary to justice. Whether this is due to the manner or circumstances in which the law was passed or the ambiguity of its wording must be determined in each case individually. Justice! A thing everybody craves and demands. Furthermore, while each party to a suit makes such interpretations of the law as will allow it to claim justice on its side and while in every case of opposing opinions and disagreement, law intervenes with its stern decision in giving satisfaction to only one side, this most naturally causes discontent on the losing side and leads to the necessity of the law being enforced, instead of being obeyed.

For the solution of the problem as to how justice can be done to all, one need only look upon the symbol or emblem of justice, the statue holding a pair of scales with the indicator pointing to the exact centre, meaning equal weight on each side of the scale, yet blindfolded and unable to see whether the contents on each side are of equal value. It seems to be advisable that those who are in a position to dispense justice should see to it that the contents of each side of the scale should, at least, be of comparatively the same value. It appears that, for instance, in every case of disagreement between capital and labor, or in other words, dollars and cents versus human efforts, it would be doing justice when the latter is given preference by law.



### *Misunderstanding*

All the miseries of life, in most cases, are due to misunderstanding. Misunderstanding between different religious creeds or denominations, although each claims to serve the same God, the same ideal; between husband and wife, although each claims adherence to the admonition to love, honor and obey, yet accuses the other of neglect; between employer and employé, although the purpose of both is to work harmoniously together, in order to derive the utmost benefits from their combined efforts; between capital and labor, although each claims to serve country and humanity. Misunderstanding of law, justice, equality, propensities and inclinations of individuals, nations and chiefly of ourselves. And this venomous and infectious fomenter of human misery and discontent is gaining fresh impetus in its destructive accomplishments by widening the gap in the human mind, in the daily rise of the so-called new ideals, due chiefly to the dissent from the moral code and complete loss of the sense of justice, which in practical life means the promotion of the personal interests of its exponents.

To remedy and, to a great extent, eliminate the miseries and discontent caused by misunderstanding or disagreement it is only necessary to observe that, in most cases, a misunderstanding or disagreement is in itself evidence that an agreement had previously existed, based upon terms satisfactorily agreed upon; in some instances, even, it gave proof of a perfect understanding originally between the now opposing parties. In such cases where no understanding or agreement had previously existed, there certainly

must or should be such principles as mankind in general adheres to. With this fact in view, it is impolitic and futile to make any attempt to clear up a misunderstanding, for if a remedy were found to eliminate it, it would only be transient; but it seems logical and serviceable to make every effort to clarify those principles, terms or points, adhered to in common by mankind, which were understood and agreed upon previously by the opposing parties, in order to arrive at a perfect understanding. And this renewed understanding by the opposing parties of things they commonly adhere to, must obviate the misunderstanding at issue and perhaps lead to its absolute elimination. Is it not of the utmost importance to have one ideal, one standard of justice acceptable to all men—at least to a great majority of men?

### *Belief, Conviction and Faith*

**BELIEF** . . . . . accepting or admitting the truth of a thing without proof or reasoning (same as to confidence of men).

**CONVICTION** . . . . anything the truth of which can be substantiated through reasoning, seeing, or through the medium of any other of the human senses.

**FAITH** . . . . . the truth of a thing which had already been substantiated. In other words, faith is derived of conviction. Not to mistake belief for faith, it is worth while to observe the following illustration from life. One who has been in the employ of another for a certain period of time, during which time he has been

tried on various occasions which proved him to be sincere, truthful, etc., is called a faithful servant, not a believable servant. In other words, after we are convinced of the virtues of a human being or of a cause, we know him to be faithful.

### *Supplement to the Constitution of the U. S.*

What should be added to the Constitution of the U. S. in order to make Americanism not only a word denoting a democratic form of government, but also the ideal of mankind, is the decalogue, as proclaimed from Sinai, and to which a great part of mankind at least professes to adhere. It is:

I AM JEHOVAH THY GOD.....

THOU shalt not make unto thyself any graven image,  
.....Thou shalt not bow thyself down  
to them, nor serve them, etc.....

THOU shalt not take the name of Jehovah, thy God,  
in vain, etc.....

REMEMBER the Sabbath day and keep it holy.....

HONOR thy father and thy mother.....

THOU shalt not kill.....

THOU shalt not commit adultery.....

THOU shalt not steal.....

THOU shalt not bear false witness against thy  
neighbor.....

THOU shalt not covet.....

With the exception of the first commandment every human being is or can easily be enlightened to the point of conviction as to the indispensability of adherence to and practice of the entire list of



commandments. Not only have men of various religious beliefs accepted the truths of these laws and advocated their adherence, but even those who profess no religious faith, such as radicals of all kinds and even anarchists—not the apostles of violence but those of the idealistic type—could be brought to their thorough understanding. For, the claim of Anarchism that there shall be no form of government is only theoretic and Utopian, in the hope that mankind will some day reach such a high stage of civilization that no form of government will be necessary. Perhaps so, but surely mankind has not reached that stage of civilization yet; and in order that it should reach it, it is necessary at present to adhere strictly to these commandments willingly and wholeheartedly, until upright and moral living has become habitual and natural.

Returning again to the first commandment, it is true that conviction can not be applied to it, so as to clarify such questions as, What is God? or Where is God? and other similar ones; for, one can either glean or present facts, as the case might be, as proof of the reality, confidence and truth of God, man, or cause. The point of conviction is, however, reached by the individual by the analysis of the facts to the satisfaction of his own conscience. Naturally, one cannot actually convince the other. But it must be admitted that when one is convinced of the validity and practicability of the subsequent nine commandments, he is simultaneously faithful to Jehovah, the God, Who proclaimed the decalogue. The paramount importance of always remembering and worshipping the name of Jehovah only is to prevent

the practice of idolatry, which is based upon belief and which is the cause of all sorts of fanaticism, as has been previously explained and as has been witnessed for centuries by all men. To this effect, the second commandment reads: "Thou shalt not make unto thyself any graven image, etc....." Besides, if God were to reveal himself at all times to every one just to satisfy the curious that is in man, the world, in fact life itself, would be rendered too prosaic and ideal-less. The divinity is the only eternal problem which shall forever occupy man's mind, in accordance with one's capacity for thought.

In a word, Jehovah is the God or ideal of reason and conviction, and the laws which He has promulgated for those created in His image, rest upon the same foundation. Therefore, one who asks others to believe in him, or advocates the belief in others, irrespective of saintly or spiritual status, is in violation of the first and second commandments. To insure justice and happiness for mankind it is, therefore, necessary to eradicate all sorts of belief and re-accept the decalogue, convinced of its indispensability; and to bring all wrong deeds under the ban as violations of the commandments. The history of a two thousand year period of belief is disappointing to all who engage in the study of it. For is it not as possible to disbelieve and be in fulfillment of the laws of man as to believe and be in violation of them? It is the moral side of religion that determines one's spiritual status. Spiritualism itself cannot be taught any more than one can teach intellectuality. The various subjects studied make up one's intellectual status; and the practice of the moral code builds one's spiritual status.



### *Amendment to the Decalogue.*

“Do whatever is just, but do not justify whatever you do,” is hereby suggested as an amendment to the commandments. Because every wrong, every crime committed has its justification. Ask the criminal and he will offer some reasons in justification of his crime. Of course, in all instances, the justification of a crime is as wrong as—perhaps more than—the crime itself; and it serves only to appease the conscience which is man’s greatest persecutor. The birth of a justification, in most cases, precedes the actual committal of the crime (otherwise, it would have not been committed), and in many instances it is formed after the crime. As a measure of prevention of the birth of such justification and its subsequent wrong deed or as an edifying means to teach repentance and the doing of penance after a crime has been committed and a justification formed, it is of the utmost importance to educate society not to justify its wrong deeds, in order to prevent their recurrence. For, if through circumstances or formidable temptation one has committed a wrong deed, he should be fully conscious of its wrong; he should know there exists no justification whatever when it is in violation of any of the fundamental laws of man or state; and should be subjected to the tortures of his own conscience. “Do whatever is just, but do not justify whatever you do.”

### *The Bible and the Constitution of the U. S.*

The Bible is considered not only the grandest of all books, but also the most sacred. When one ex-

amines carefully the contents of the Constitution of the U. S., however, one will find the latter not less sacred. The Bible, with the exception of the ten commandments, is of no avail to the man of to-day; for the legends or the history of peoples who bear no relation to the present generation of mankind, the biographies of men who, though great in their day, reflect no influence upon the present, could not equal the noble yet rational doctrines of Americanism. Moreover, the liberties and equality of rights guaranteed by the Constitution are far more liberal than any mentioned in the Bible. Also the guarantee extended to every individual in the pursuit of happiness contained in the Constitution is of no less worth than the exhortation to "Love thy neighbor as thyself," which is considered the pedestal of the entire Bible. Nothing is holy unless man makes it so.

Whatever measure of truth there may be in the belief that there is a certain measure of hypocrisy in every man, yet the preachers and ministers of religion are, rightly or wrongly, considered to exhibit that failing, unconsciously, perhaps, more prominently than the layman. This accounts for the faint effect their preaching and teaching have upon the public. But there is still a great majority who have confidence in the superior American and even in the average American (except politicians), and who will, after readily listening to him, cheerfully comply with the fundamental laws when expounded by a fellow American along lines of sound sense and conviction.

If we want to give a meaning to the term religion, so that it should be a credit to any one to claim it; if we want to unify mankind into one great family,

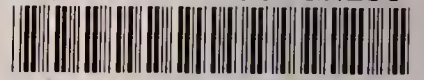
instead of being disintegrated into races, creeds, sects and denominations; if we want to eradicate belief, the cause of all sorts of fanaticism; if we want to eliminate the useless efforts of continually passing and enacting laws, which in reality are not favored by the majority, and accept anew the ten commandments, which are recognized by all men; if we want to eliminate misunderstanding, the cause of almost all human misery and discontent; if we want to start an era of reason and conviction, instead of the bigoted two thousand year period of belief; if we want to be conscious of our wrong deeds and repent and do penance, instead of justifying them; if we want not only to revere, but also to sanctify the noble, yet rational doctrines of the Constitution of the U. S.; if we want to make this a period not only of reconstruction, but also of transformation; if we want to live up to the spirit of the present day as being the age of enlightenment; if we want to prove to the world that a true democracy is synonymous with the principles of theocracy; if we want to perpetuate the ideals of monotheism and Americanism, which would simultaneously obliterate all other non-desirable "isms," let us all be enlightened and convinced that Jehovah is the God, Americanism the religion.







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